

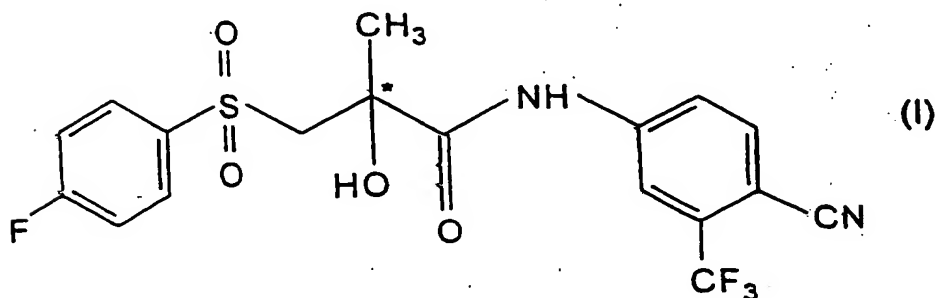
CLAIM AMENDMENTS

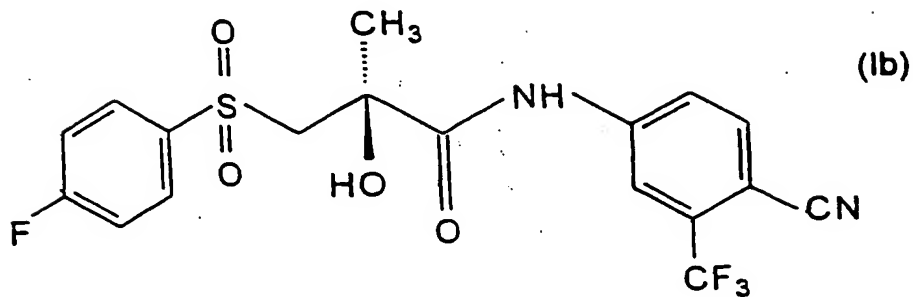
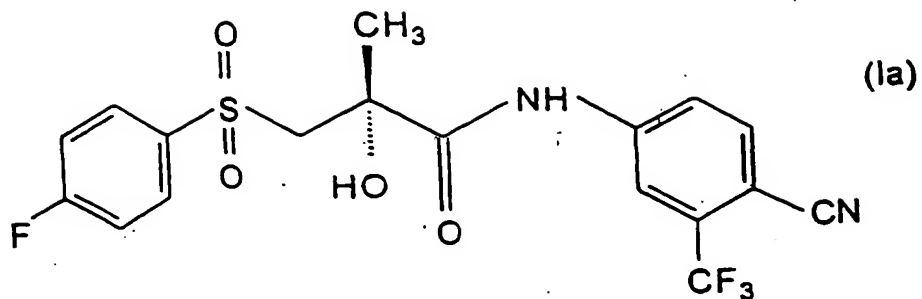
1 through 16 (canceled)

Please insert the following before new claim 17:

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

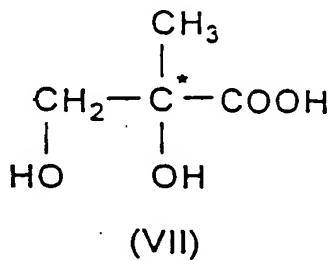
1 17. (New) A process for the synthesis of racemic or
2 optically pure R-(-)- and S-(+)-N-[4-cyano-3-trifluoro
3 methyl-phenyl]-3-[4-fluorophenyl-sulfonyl]-2-
4 hydroxy-2-methylpropionamide of formula (I), (Ia) and (Ib),
5 respectively,



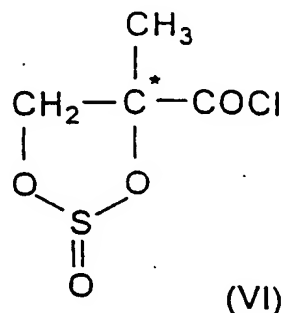


which comprises the steps of:

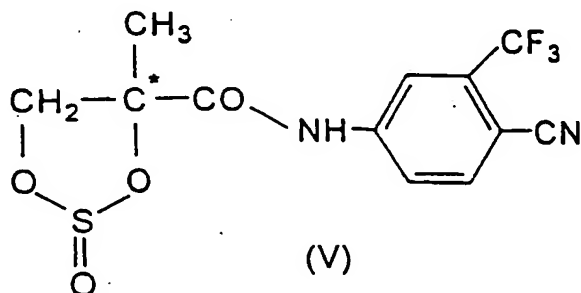
- (a) reacting racemic or optically pure
2,3-dihydroxy-2-methyl-propionic acid of formula (VII)



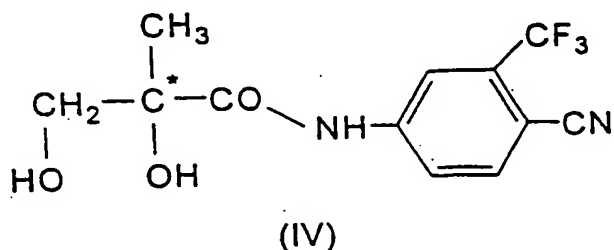
with thionyl chloride in a halogenated hydrocarbon or in an aromatic solvent in the presence of an aromatic amine as base to obtain a compound of the Formula (VI)



(b) reacting the obtained racemic or optically pure 4-chloro-carbonyl-4-methyl-1,3,2-dioxathiolane-2-one of the Formula (VI) with 4-cyano-3-trifluoromethyl-aniline in an inert solvent in the presence of a tertiary amine as base between -40 and 0°C to obtain racemic or optically pure 4-[[4-cyano-3-(trifluoromethyl)-anilino]-carbonyl]-4-methyl-1,3,2-dioxathiolane-2-one of formula (V)



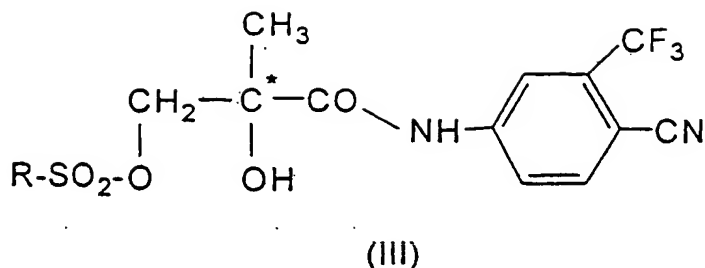
(c) hydrolyzing the obtained racemic or optically pure 4-
{[4-cyano-3-(trifluoromethyl)-anilino]-carbonyl}-4-methyl-
1,3,2-dioxathiolane-2-one of formula (V) under aqueous basic
conditions to obtain racemic or optically pure N[4-cyano-3-
(trifluoromethyl)-phenyl]-2,3-dihydroxy-2-methyl-propionamide of
formula (IV)



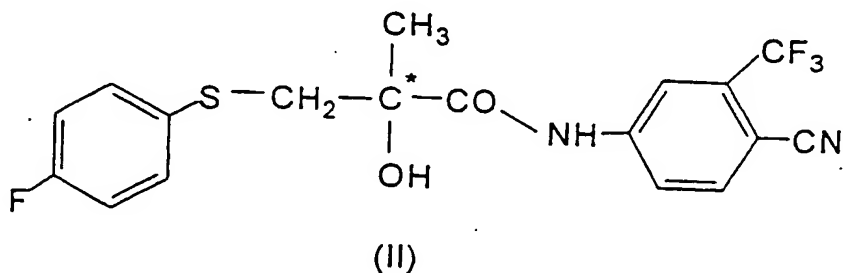
(d) sulfonylating the formed racemic or optically pure N-
[4-cyano-3-(trifluoromethyl)-phenyl]-2,3-dihydroxy-2-
methyl-propionamide of formula (IV) with a sulfonyl halogenide of
formula



wherein the meaning of R is methyl, p-tolyl or p-bromo-phenyl and X
is a halogen atom - in a halogenated hydrocarbon as solvent in the
presence of a tertiary amine as base to obtain a compound of the
Formula (III)



41 (e) reacting the obtained racemic or optically pure
 42 compound of the Formula (III) wherein R is methyl, p-tolyl or
 43 p-bromo-phenyl with 4-fluorothiophenol in the presence of a base,
 44 to obtain a racemic or optically active thioether compound of the
 45 Formula (II)



47 and

48 (f) finally oxidizing the obtained racemic or optically
 49 pure thioether of the Formula (II) with

50 (I) an inorganic peroxy salt in a mixture of water
 51 and a solvent miscible or not miscible with water, in the latter
 52 case in the presence of a phase transfer catalyst, or

53 (ii) aqueous hydrogen peroxide

54 A) in a C₁-C₄ aliphatic carboxylic acid, or

55 B) under aqueous basic conditions, in the
56 presence of an organic solvent miscible with water, or

57 C) in an organic solvent not miscible with
58 water in the presence of a phase transfer catalyst and a salt of a
59 metal belonging to the vanadium or chromium group to obtain the
60 compound of the Formula (Ia), (Ib) or (Ic).

1 18. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (a) the reaction of the racemic or optically pure
3 2,3-dihydroxy-2-methyl-propionic acid with thionyl chloride is
4 carried out in dichloromethane, chloroform or 1,2-dichloroethane as
5 halogenated hydrocarbon, or in benzene, toluene or xylene as
6 aromatic solvent in the presence of pyridine as aromatic base.

1 19. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (b) the reaction of the racemic or optically pure
3 4-chlorocarbonyl-4-methyl-1,3,2-dioxathiolane-2-one of formula (VI)
4 with 4-cyano-3-trifluoromethyl-aniline is carried out in the
5 presence of triethylamine as tertiary amine base.

1 20. (New) The process defined in claim 19, wherein a
2 halogenated or an aromatic hydrocarbon or an ether type solvent is
3 used as an inert solvent.

1 21. (New) The process defined in claim 19, wherein the
2 reaction is carried out between -15 and 0°C.

1 22. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (c) the hydrolysis of the racemic or optically
3 pure 4-[[4-cyano-3-(trifluoromethyl)-anilino]-carbonyl]-
4 4-methyl-1,3,2-dioxathiolane-2-one of formula (V) is carried out in
5 an aqueous medium containing an alkali metal hydroxide.

1 23. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (d) sulfonylating the racemic or optically pure
3 [4-cyano-3-(trifluoromethyl-phenyl)-2,3-dihydroxy-
4 2-methyl-propionamide of formula (IV) is carried out in
5 dichloromethane as the halogenated hydrocarbon solvent in the
6 presence of pyridine as the tertiary amine base.

1 24. (New) The process defined in claim 17 wherein
2 according to step (e) the racemic or optically pure compound of
3 the Formula (III) is reacted with 4-fluorothiophenol in the
4 presence of an inorganic base.

1 25. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (f), part (I) the racemic or optically pure
3 thioether of the Formula (II) is oxidized with a mixture of
4 $2\text{KHSO}_5, \text{KHSO}_4, \text{K}_2\text{SO}_4$ (OxoneO) as inorganic peroxy salt.

1 26. (New) The process defined in claim 25, wherein the
2 oxidation is carried out in a mixture of methanol and water.

1 27. (New) The process defined in claim 25, wherein the
2 oxidation is carried out in a mixture of dichloromethane and water
3 in the presence of a phase transfer catalyst.

1 28. (New) The process defined in claim 25, wherein the
2 oxidation is carried out in a mixture of ethyl acetate and water in
3 the presence of a phase transfer catalyst.

1 29. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (f), part (ii)(A) the oxidation of the racemic or
3 optically pure thioether of the Formula (II) is carried out in
4 formic acid or acetic acid as C₁-C₄ aliphatic carboxylic acid in the
5 presence of aqueous hydrogen peroxide.

1 30. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (f), part (ii)(B) the oxidation of the racemic or
3 optically pure thioether of the Formula (II) is carried out in
4 aqueous alkali metal carbonate solution in the presence of
5 acetonitrile and/or a C₁-C₄ alkanol as the organic solvent miscible
6 with water in the presence of aqueous hydrogen peroxide.

1 31. (New) The process defined in claim 17, wherein
2 according to step (f), part (ii)(C) the oxidation of the racemic or

3 optically pure thioether of the Formula (II) is carried out in a
4 halogenated hydrocarbon as the organic solvent not miscible with
5 water in the presence of a quaternary ammonium salt as phase
6 transfer catalyst and sodium tungstate with aqueous hydrogen
7 peroxide.

1 32. (New) The process defined in claim 27 wherein
2 tetrabutyl-ammonium hydrogensulfate, cetyltrimetylammonium chloride
3 or tetrabutyl-ammonium chloride is used as phase transfer catalyst.

1 33. (New) The process defined in claim 28 wherein
2 tetrabutyl-ammonium hydrogensulfate, cetyltrimetylammonium chloride
3 or tetrabutyl-ammonium chloride is used as phase transfer catalyst.

1 34. (New) The process defined in claim 31 wherein
2 tetrabutyl-ammonium hydrogensulfate, cetyltrimetylammonium chloride
3 or tetrabutyl-ammonium chloride is used as phase transfer catalyst.